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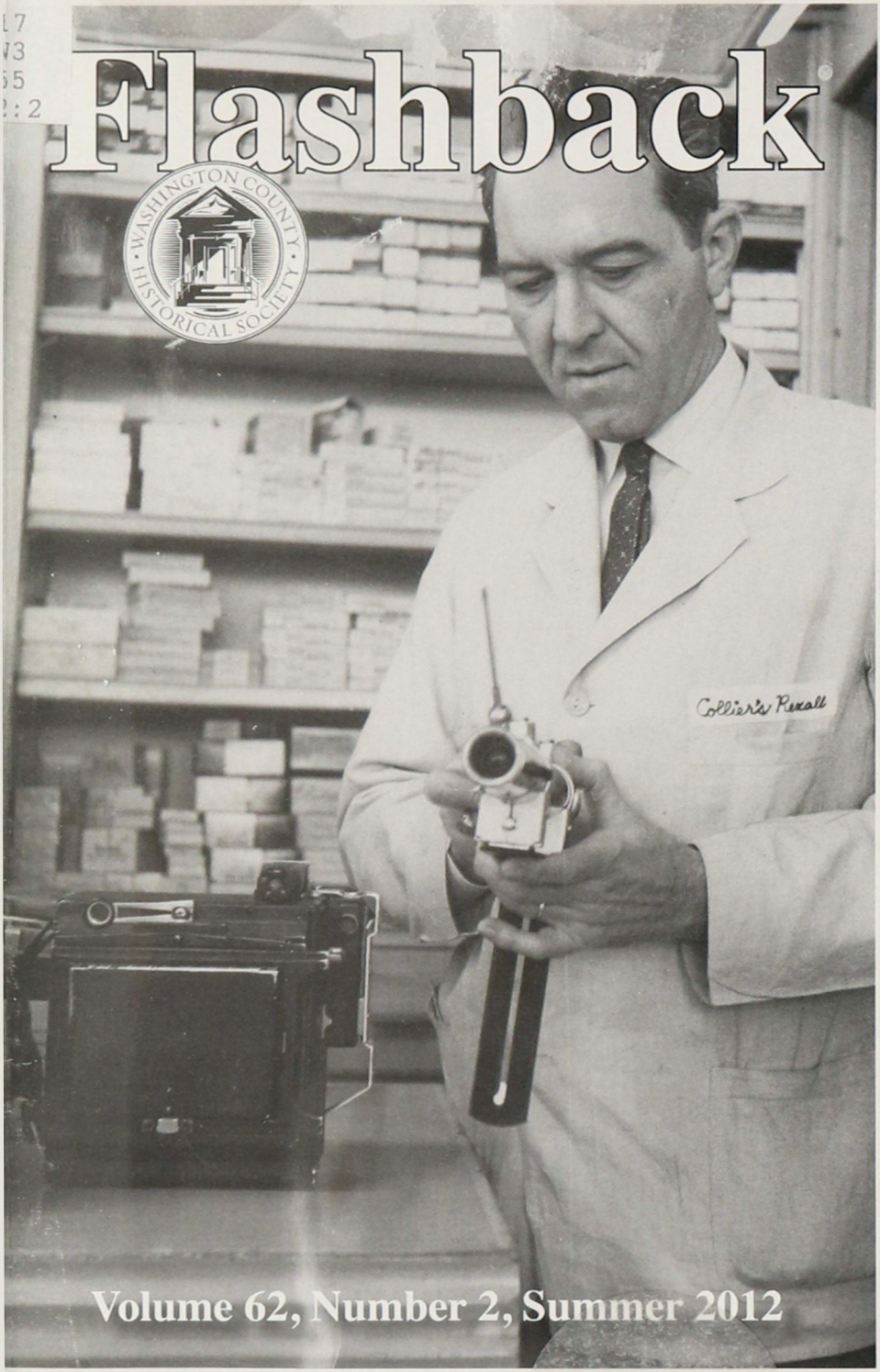

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Society membership is invited to those interested in preservation of Washington County history. Annual dues for categories of members are: Senior, Student, Public Library, $15; General, $25; Trail Blazer, $50; Explorer $100; Wagon Master, $250; Pioneer, $500; Statesman, $1,000; Empire Builder, $5,000.

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FLASHBACK

Journal of the Washington County Historical Society
Preserving the Past for the Future

Volume 62 Summer 2012 Number 2

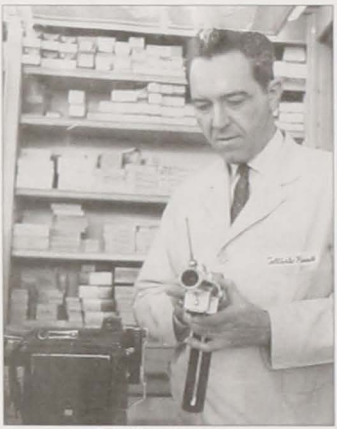
CONTENTS

A History of Collier Drug Store ..... Page 51
By J.B. Hogan

Tracking the Jesse Tharp Family ..... Page 68
By Raymond R. Tharp

Nature Reclaims Skelton Cemetery ..... Page 76
By Jon Schleuss

1831 Sheriff's Census of Washington County ..... Page 92



Courtesy of Collier Drug Store

On the cover: Morris Collier, then-owner and manager of Collier Drug Store, is pictured in the 1950s, checking a film camera destined for sale in the store's photography section. A history of the store and its predecessor, the Red Cross Drug Store, looks at four generations of Colliers who have operated this family-owned Washington County pharmacy. It begins on Page 51.

A History of Collier Drug Store

By J. B. Hogan

For over sixty years, the Collier Drug Store on the corner of Dickson Street and St. Charles Avenue has been a Fayetteville fixture. Opened on April 25, 1950, the family-run business has served generations of local residents.

Always high-tech inside and out, Collier Drug is a link between old Fayetteville and its newer self. Four generations of Colliers have operated drug stores in Fayetteville and surrounding communities, and their history actually predates the current location by another three decades.

On April 1, 1917[1], Melvin M. Collier, the patriarch of the family and drug store business, became manager "with an interest in" the Red Cross Drug Store[2] located on the north side of Fayetteville's downtown square.

M.M. Collier came to Fayetteville by way of Prairie Grove where he had "had considerable experience in drug stores" and was "a member of the lower house of the legislature."[3] Even back then, from its very beginning, the Collier-run business was ahead of its time, offering customers such "cutting edge services" as "delivery and charge accounts."[4]

Over the next decade, the Red Cross Drug Store became an abiding presence on the square. Then, in 1930, after graduating from Fayetteville High School where he starred on the first Bulldog football team to play at Harmon Field, Morris G. Collier – Melvin M.'s son – completed pharmacy school in St. Louis[5] and began working full-time[6] in the family business.

The next major event that befell the now second-generation drug store occurred on April 27, 1932. On that long ago day, a terrible fire spread across the square and became a major blaze

Photo courtesy of Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Washington County Historical Society Collection (P-120)

The Red Cross Drug Store (center) did good business in the early 1930s despite the economic downturn, partly because it was tucked between two of the busiest operations on the Fayetteville square — McIlroy Bank on the left and the Boston Store on the right.

that nearly consumed the Red Cross store. The bold newspaper headline reported: "$40,000 Fire At Red Cross Drug Co. Today."[7] As devastating as that fire was, especially coming just as the Great Depression was deepening throughout the country, the Colliers regrouped, rebuilt and reopened the Red Cross store in the fall of 1932.

After the great fire, the Red Cross Drug Store went through a period of stability that lasted through the rest of the Depression

Photo courtesy of Collier Drug Store

Citizens Laundry, which had earlier been a roller skating rink, as it appeared in the early 1900s on the site of the present-day Collier Drug Store.

and World War II. With technological advances sweeping the nation in the post-war years, however, the Colliers – Morris had become partners with his father in 1943[8] – believed they and Fayetteville were ready for a drug store upgrade.

In the years after the war, with his father now retired, Morris Collier purchased a lot on the northwest corner of Dickson and St. Charles streets.[9] What he had in mind, Collier said at the time, was a new drug store off the square that would "be as much self-service as possible, in the modern trend of service."[10]

Matching the service would be the new building itself, described as "modernistic" in the *Northwest Arkansas Times*.[11] This new building was to be "of pink brick" with "an all-glass 106-foot front" and topped by "a 28-foot stucco tower with the name 'Collier' in metal."

It would feature air conditioning,[12] "tarazza floors," and as any kid from the era can tell you, "automatic electric glass doors" – an absolute marvel for the time and the first in Northwest Ar-

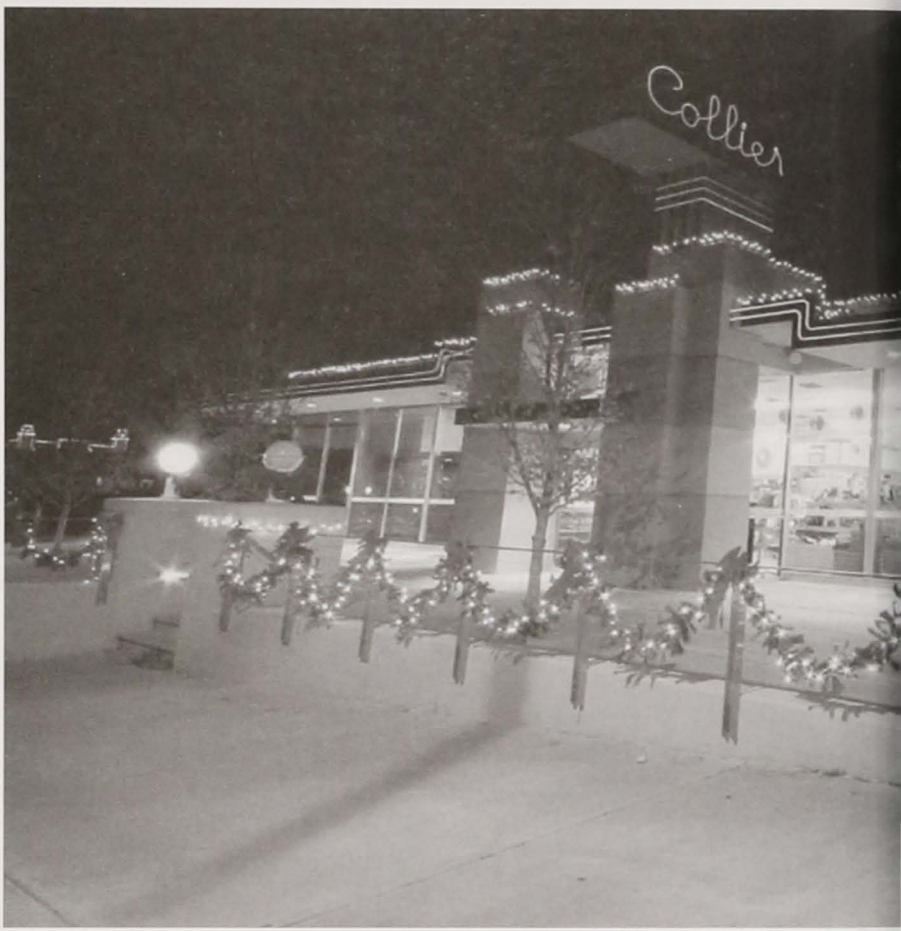
Collier Drug Store, seen here in the mid-1950s, opened in the spring of 1950 at the northwest corner of Dickson Street and St. Charles Avenue. At the

Courtesy of Collier Drug Store

time, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, seen beyond Collier Drug Store, still stood at the northeast corner of the intersection.

The soda fountain of Collier Drug Store as it appeared in the 1950s.

Courtesy of Collier Drug Store



In the early 2000s, the streetscape of Dickson Street was redesigned, and Collier Drug Store removed its streetside parking, replacing it with a plaza,

kansas. The store also had another kid- and family-friendly feature: a full-service soda fountain.

Before the new store was built, however, the man who had started the family business that has endured for decades in Fayetteville, Melvin M. Collier, passed away on July 24, 1949. The "widely known druggist"[13] was eulogized as a "valued citizen,"

Courtesy of Collier Drug Store

seen here decorated for Lights of the Ozarks and the holiday season.

one always willing to do his part for "civic betterment."[14] Fayetteville and the many groups in which he took an active part, the *Northwest Arkansas Times* stated, would "feel the loss his death has brought about."[15]

The following spring of 1950 brought happier news: the opening of the new Collier Drug Store. On April 24, a large ad-

Photo courtesy of Collier Drug Store

Morris Collier (1908-1995), son of M.M. Collier, who owned and maanged the Red Cross Drug Store on the north side of the Fayetteville Square for three decades. Morris Collier built, owned and managed the "new" Collier Drug Store at the corner of Dickson Street and St. Charles Avenue.

vertisement appeared in the *Northwest Arkansas Times* announcing the new store and the next day, April 25, 1950, Collier Drug Store, owned and managed by Morris G. Collier, opened for business in its "modern Art Deco building."[16]

The store, which was built upon the site of a former skating rink and the old Citizens Laundry,[17] was hailed as "Northwest Arkansas' Most Modern Super Drug Store." In addition to the soda fountain[18] and the "magic eye" that automatically opened the glass front doors, Collier's offered Rexall prescription drugs,

cameras and supplies, and "quality" service. As Morris Collier said in the opening day ad: "We dedicate this store to build a business ... that will advance continually ... to create a personality that will be known for its strength and friendliness."[19]

For several years after opening the new Collier Drug Store, the Collier family still operated the Red Cross Drug Store on the square. In January of 1953, the Red Cross Store was burglarized with the crooks taking between $600 and $1,200 from a basement vault.[20]

Carl Collier, the third generation owner

About two and one-half years later, the *Northwest Arkansas Times* reported that in the early morning hours of September 2, 1955, a far worse fate befell the Red Cross store: it was ravaged by fire. The store suffered wide-spread losses that ran into the "thousands of dollars."

Because of the heavy damage to the Red Cross store, on September 12, 1955, the Collier family chose to have a liquidation sale of its remaining assets. Following the sale, the operation was moved to the newer Collier Drug on Dickson Street[21] and, after nearly forty years of continuous service on the square in Fayetteville, the Red Cross Drug Store closed its doors for the last time.

In 1960, the next generation of Colliers joined the family business when Morris H. graduated from pharmacy school. Just

four years later, Carl Collier also completed pharmacy training and began working for the family as well. According to the store website, during this time the family company was incorporated making each of the working members an owner.[22]

In the mid-1960s, the Dickson Street store needed a bit more room and "Collier expanded into the vacated Dyke Lumber Company building to the north"[23] Then at the end of the decade, in June 1969, Collier had their first branch expansion: adding the new Collier Rexall East Drug Store and Western Shop at East Gate Shoppers City.[24] Four years later, in 1973, Colliers became the first pharmacy in Arkansas and the fourth in the United States "to use computers for prescription tracking and for keeping pharmacy records."[25]

Over the following decades, Collier Drug Store continued to expand, adding a branch in north Fayetteville in 1986 and the North Hills Fayetteville store in 1994. The following year, 1995, they added their first out of town store in Pea Ridge.

Also in 1995, the family suffered the loss of Morris Collier, who passed away January 18. Morris Collier was eulogized in the *Northwest Arkansas Times* by long-time employee John Page as a "customer-oriented" man of great energy who "thrived on people," still working occasionally even after retirement "just to chat" with customers and friends. Louis Bryant Jr., another employee with years of service with Colliers, said: "You can't find a better person than Mr. Collier."[26]

Carl Collier, Morris' son, had taken over the reins from his father upon the elder man's retirement and along with his children Mel and Meredith (who has since moved on to real estate work)[27] shaped Collier's future during the 1990s and into the current century.

One of the hallmarks of recent years has been more expansion. In 2005, branches were opened in Farmington and Johnson. A branch at the Northwest Medical Center in Bentonville brought the total of Collier stores to seven in Northwest Arkansas.

In 2007 Collier Drug Stores celebrated an important anni-

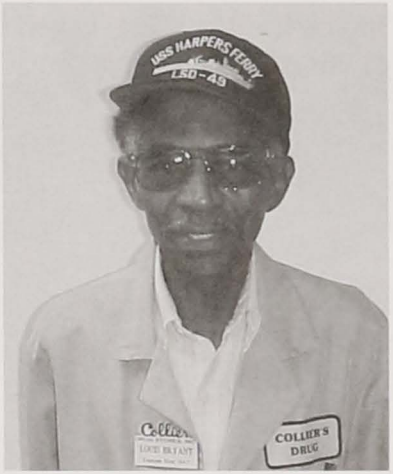
Photo courtesy of Collier Drug Store

A fleet of red delivery cars, parked at the Dickson Street store, is used by Collier Drug Store to deliver prescription pharmaceuticals and other goods to customers across Washington County, one of many personalized services that has kept Collier's in business despite competition from larger national chains.

versary: ninety years of business and service to the local community. "Fayetteville's last family-owned drugstore,"[28] beginning in 1917 with the Red Cross Drug Store on the square and continuing into the new millennium with seven stores in town and the surrounding area, had survived – flourished – for nine full decades.

No history of Colliers would be complete without mention of at least two of their longest-serving employees, John Page and Louis Bryant Jr.

Page, a pharmacist, began working at Collier's in 1961 and had 37 years of perfect attendance. He has been past president of both the Arkansas State Board of Health and the State Board of Pharmacy. The importance of Page's work and contribution



Lewis Bryant Jr.

John Page

to the local area has been recognized by the city of Fayetteville, which honored him with a John Page Day and presented him a key to the city.[29]

Bryant worked as a deliveryman at Collier's for "nearly 60 years,"[30] becoming a virtual fixture there. Bryant, who passed away in 2007, was thought of so highly by the Collier family that they had a "one-day store closing to celebrate and honor his life."[31]

Today, Collier Drug Store remains a Fayetteville institution. Now in business for almost one hundred years, the Collier family will soon begin a second century of service to Fayetteville and the surrounding area. Under the direction of young Mel Collier, the family's fourth generation in the business, Collier Drug is positioned to remain a viable local enterprise well into the foreseeable future.

END NOTES

1. "Change in Management of Red Cross April 1," *Fayetteville Democrat* (Daily), March 5, 1917, reported that M. M. Collier was to become manager/owner of the Red Cross Drug Store. This article also said that Collier had "purchased an interest

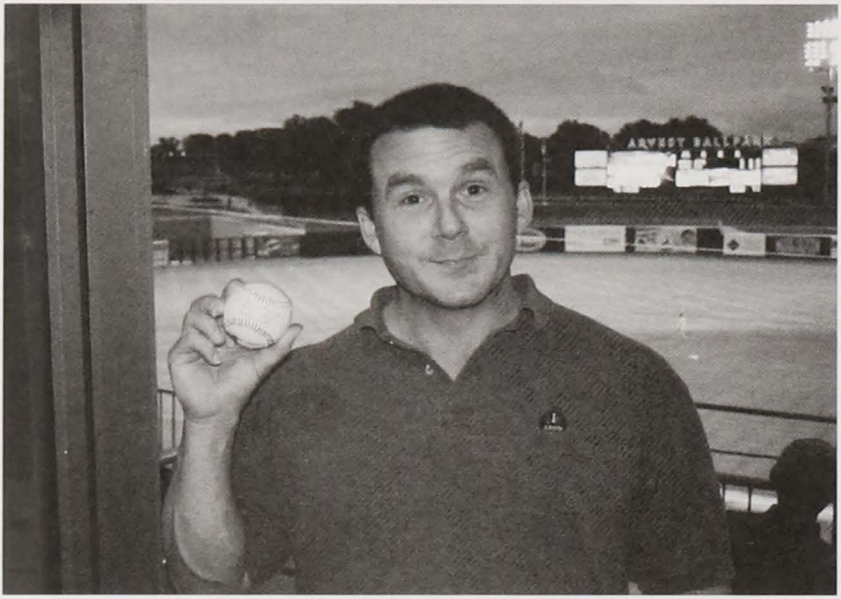


Photo courtesy of Collier Drug Store

Mel Collier, the fourth generation owner-manager of Collier Drug Store, holds up a baseball after throwing out the ceremonial first pitch at an Arkansas Naturals game at Arvest Ballpark in Springdale in 2008. By 2012, Collier Drug Store Inc. had stores in Bentonville, Farmington, Fayetteville, Johnson, Pea Ridge and Prairie Grove.

in the Red Cross drug store."

2. W. S. Campbell, in his *100 Years of Fayetteville: 1828-1928*, and local newspaper accounts both say that the Red Cross Drug Store opened in 1904 but the first reference in the *Fayetteville Democrat* (Daily) to "The Red Cross Store" is in an ad for the Hight-Carnahan Co. dated March 30, 1906 (the first ad for just Hight-Carnahan by itself appeared in early February 1906). On May 3, 1906, the first ad for just the Red Cross Store appears.
3. "Change in Management of Red Cross April 1,"*Fayetteville Democrat* (Daily), March 5, 1917.
4. Collier Drug Store website (www.collierdrug.com).
5. Ibid.
6. Morris Collier had actually begun working in his dad's store as a delivery boy back in 1919, *Northwest Arkansas Times,* November 2, 1949.
7. *Fayetteville Daily Democrat,* April 27, 1932.
8. *Northwest Arkansas Times,* November 2, 1949.
9. *Ibid.*, September 1, 1948.
10. *Ibid.*, November 2, 1949.

11. *Ibid.*
12. Local residents will recall that during this era the two establishments with the coldest and most effective air-conditioning in town were the Ozark Theatre and Collier Drug Store.
13. *Northwest Arkansas Times*, July 25, 1949.
14. *Ibid.*, July 26, 1949.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Anthony J. Wappel, with Ethel C. Simpson, *Once Upon Dickson* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas, published in cooperation with the University of Arkansas Libraries Special Collections Department, 2008), p. 110.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 106-107.
18. In 1958, the "Collier family donated the soda fountain from the Fayetteville Store to the Fayetteville Youth Center, where it was enjoyed for several years." Collier Drug Store website (www.collierdrug.com).
19. *Northwest Arkansas Times*, April 24, 1950.
20. *Ibid.*, January 5, 1953.
21. Collier Drug Store website (www.collierdrug.com).
22. Ibid.
23. *Once Upon Dickson*, p. 112.
24. *Northwest Arkansas Times*, June 20, 1969.
25. Collier Drug Store website (www.collierdrug.com).
26. *Northwest Arkansas Times*, January 19, 1995.
27. Interview with Mel Collier, October 30. 2009.
28. *Once Upon Dickson*, p. 112.
29. Collier Drug Store website (www.collierdrug.com).
30. *Once Upon Dickson*, p. 112.
31. *Ibid.*

Deadline Nearing for Submissions for Fifth Annual Lemke Prize

Deadline for submitting an article for the fifth annual competition for the Walter J. Lemke Prize is June 30. Anyone interested in Washington County history, whether a professional or amateur historian, is encouraged to enter. Topics can be on any phase of Washington County's history or archeology, deal with an individual or institution connected with the county, and can address any time period.

The winning article will receive $300; Second prize receives $200. Both winners receive framed certificates. Winners will be recognized in August 2012.

Manuscripts will be judged on their contribution to the expansion of the county's history; the originality of the subject; and, the use of primary and secondary sources. The manuscripts must be original material, and not have been previously published; no more than 40 pages, typed, and double-spaced. Footnotes should be included on separate, double-spaced pages, although they do not count toward the 40-page limit. The title page should contain the heading "WALTER J. LEMKE ENTRY," the full title of the manuscript, the author's name, mailing address, telephone number, and email address.

Entries become the property of the Washington County Historical Society and will not be returned to the author. All submitted articles will be considered for publication in the *Flashback*. The historical society reserves the right to award one or no prizes.

Copies of all entries in the Lemke Prize will be deposited with the Special Collections Department at the University of Arkansas Libraries. Entries may be mailed to Lemke Prize, Washington County Historical Society, 118 E. Dickson Street, Fayetteville, AR 72701, or emailed to charlie.alison@gmail.com by June 30, 2012. If the entries are emailed, they should be either in the PDF or Microsoft Word format. Entries received after June 30 will be considered for the 2013 prize.

For additional information, contact Charlie Alison at the above mailing address, at 575-6731 or at charlie.alison@gmail.com.

Tracking the Jesse Tharp Family

By Raymond R. Tharp

When it comes to family history, my wife tells me I am "like an old hound dog on a scent." It is true. If a find a clue (even the smallest bit) about my family, I am on it like a hound dog on a scent. I will follow its footprints to see where it leads, hoping it will be a piece of the puzzle that brings family connection.

Jesse and Eliza (Roberson) Tharp are my great, great-grandparents. Their families traveled from Tennessee to Arkansas in the early 1840s. Jesse's parents were Lewis and Judy (Vernon) Tharp. Eliza's parents were John and Priscilla (Howry) Roberson. Jesse and Eliza married May 14, 1846, in Washington County, Arkansas. Ten children were born to this Tharp family. I have documentation to verify the following information for these children.[1] They are:

Emeline Matilda Tharp
Birth: 1847, Washington County, Ark.
Death: Unknown
Spouse: John Clark Long
Birth: July 3, 1845, Tenn.
Death: September 1, 1912
Buried: Westview Cemetery, Harmon County, Okla.
Marriage Date: December 26, 1873, Washington County, Ark.

John Lewis Tharp
Birth: January 1, 1848, Washington County, Ark.
Death: February 13, 1934, Leon County, Texas
Buried: Evans Chapel Cemetery, Leon County
Spouse: Annie Watson
Birth: June 1, 1855, Washington County, Ark.
Death: December 16, 1920, Near Rogers, Texas

Photo courtesy of Raymond R. Tharp

The parents of Eliza Tharp, John and Priscilla (Howry) Roberson. Jesse Tharp's parents were Lewis and Judy (Vernon) Tharp.

Photo courtesy of Raymond R. Tharp

Jesse and Eliza Tharp, undated.

Buried: McCann Cemetery, Milam County, Texas
Marriage Date: August 4, 1870, Washington County, Ark.

Narcissa A. Tharp
Birth: April 24, 1853, Washington Co., Ark.
Death: April 8, 1932, Jackson County, Okla.
Buried: Carmel Cemetery, Jackson Co., Okla.
Spouse: James Dickerson
Birth: July 23, 1855
Death: Nov. 25, 1889
Buried: Unknown
Marriage Date: April 7, 1872, Washington County, Ark.

Priscilla Guesswin Tharp
Birth: August 5, 1855, Washington Co., Ark.
Death: August 10, 1943, El Paso, Texas
Buried: Evergreen Alameda Cem. El Paso, Texas
Spouse: John Calvin Cantrell

Birth: Oct. 6, 1844, Bell County, Texas
Death: Nov. 11, 1919, El Paso, Texas
Buried: Evergreen Alameda Cem., El Paso, Texas
Marriage Date: January 3, 1886, Montague County, Texas

Mary E. Tharp
Birth: 1860, Washington County, Ark.
Death: January 8, 1938, Willard, Torrance Co., N.M.
Buried: Torrance County, N.M.
Spouse: J. C. Scivally
Birth: 1861, Mo.
Death: July 2, 1937, Willard, Torrance, N.M.
Buried: Torrance County, New Mexico
Marriage Date: January 6, 1889, Wise County, Texas

Rachel D. Tharp
Birth: Jan. 17, 1860, Washington County, Ark.
Death: Nov. 26, 1925 – Washington County, Ark.
Buried: McCord Cemetery, Elkins, Ark.
Spouse: W. S. Springstun
Birth: March 28, 1860
Death: May 17, 1922, Washington County, Ark.
Buried: McCord Cemetery, Elkins, Arkansas
Marriage Date: March 9, 1884, Washington County, Ark.

George W. Tharp
Birth: 1862 – Washington County, Ark.
Death: Unknown

Susan J. Tharp
Birth: 1864 – Washington County, Ark.
Death: Unknown

James L. Tharp
Birth: February, 1866 – Washington County, Ark.
Death: Unknown
Spouse: Dona F.
Birth: 1879 – Texas
Death: Unknown
Marriage Date: Unknown

Lydia Tharp
Birth: March, 1865 – Washington County, Ark.

Death: February 12, 1913 – Hollis, Okla.
Buried: Westview Cemetery, Hollis, Okla.
Spouse: Jefferson Davis Blagg
Birth: July, 1862
Death: May 10, 1912 – Hollis, Okla.
Buried: Westview Cemetery, Hollis, Okla.
Marriage Date: December 13, 1886 – Wise County, Texas

In my research, I found that Lewis and Judy (Vernon) Tharp were buried in the Reese Cemetery and John and Priscilla (Howry) Roberson were buried in the Roberson Cemetery. But my search for the gravesites of Jesse and Eliza Tharp was a puzzle.

Everything I found suggested they were buried in Washington County, Arkansas. This would seem logical since they were listed on the 1880 Federal Census in the White River Township in Washington County, Arkansas. The next census to check would be 1900 because there was no census available for 1890. Since their names did not appear on the 1900 Census, my thought was "They have died and are probably buried in Washington County, Arkansas since that is the last place listed as to where they lived."

When my wife and I were in Fayetteville several years ago, we visited the Tharp Cemetery. We visited several Tharp gravesites in hope of finding the gravesite of Jesse and Eliza Tharp but we left empty-handed.

In my research I read an article, "Wandering The Ozarks" by Velda Brotherton,[2] which included information about the Roberson Cemetery. In that article she said "A few weeks ago we ran a photograph of the coffin-like grave stones, fashioned by Nathan Tharp, which are found in some older cemeteries in the county." Immediately, I wanted to contact her about my Tharp family in Arkansas since she mentioned Nathan Tharp, who was Jesse Tharp's brother. In her response, she said, "The only information I had found about the Tharps was in a book written and published by Joyce Chandler" about the White House Community. She stated that no other information about the Tharps was found in the book. But she did wish me luck in my search.

Photos by Raymond R. Tharp

Smyna Cemetery and the headstones of Eliza and Jesse Tharp.

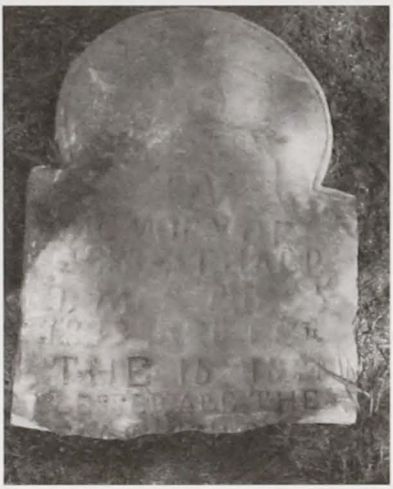
As I continued my search for the burial site of Jesse and Eliza Tharp, I was continuously browsing the nooks and crannies of the Internet websites in hopes of finding something that would help me. It seemed that I was hopelessly bound with the suggestion that Jesse and Eliza Tharp were buried in Washington County, Ark., in an unmarked grave. I wasn't ready to accept that idea, so I plunged ahead in my search for that bit of information that would help me solve the mystery.

Many of the search results that came up with each request I made on the web were of no value. Excitement arose the day I had a result that showed some Tharps were buried in Montague County, Texas, in the Smyrna Cemetery. The information given was very scant. It read:

> "Tharp ? 14 Mar 18?? 22 Sep 1898 wife of Jesse Tharp
> Tharp Jesse (Unreadable stone)"[3]

The question that comes to mind, "Is this the bit of information I need to solve my mystery?" I needed to find out. So I started by reviewing the report on "Smyrna Cemetery" published in the *Montague Milestones*, October 4, 1990.[4] It was the results of the work and research done by Joyce and Ernest Whatley on the

Eliza Tharp's headstone



Jesse Tharp's headstone

cemetery records of those who were born and died in the 1800s that were buried in the Smyrna Cemetery. The information given stated that Jesse Tharp was born 1822 and died 1894. The birth year given agreed with the age given for Jesse on the 1870 Federal Census of Arkansas. This was a positive sign and enhanced my thought that I was on the right track.

A trip to Montague County, Texas, to visit the gravesite of the Tharps buried in the Smyrna Cemetery was in order. My wife and I packed our bags, camera, and the necessary materials to make rubbings of the Tharp grave markers. When we arrived at the cemetery, my adrenalin level rose. Would this be the gravesite of my great, great-grandparents, Jesse and Eliza Tharp? We found the markers fairly quickly. One was standing upright and the other one was broken and lying on the ground. I knelt down in front of the standing marker to examine it closely. My eyes moistened as I viewed the name. It spelled out ELIZA R. THARP. Quickly, I moved over to the other marker to examine it. I could make out the letters JESSE THARP. Indeed, these were my great, great-grandparents. I studied the markers

very carefully to determine what was imprinted on them. The vital information is given below.

Eliza's marker read:

IN MEMORY:
OF ELIZA R. THARP
BORN MARCH 14, 1828
DIED SEPT. THE 22
1898 AGE 65Y. 6M. 8D.
WIFE OF JESSE THARP

Jesse's marker read:

IN
MEMORY OF
JESSE THARP
B. MAR. THE 26
1822 DIED DEC.
THE 15 1894

As I continued my research, I found several interesting facts concerning the family of Jesse and Eliza Tharp. First, their daughter Rachel was married in Washington County in 1884. Second, their daughters, Lydia and Mary were married in Wise County, Texas. One in 1886 and the other in 1889. Third, their daughter Priscilla married in Montague County, Texas, in 1886. This would indicate that the Jesse Tharp family moved to Texas sometime between 1884 and 1886, probably 1885.

Mystery is faced in many areas of life, especially in family history. We just have to keep on searching to find that bit of information that will solve the mystery. I am glad this old hound dog still has his scent. It really helped me to find the gravesites of my great, great, grandparents, Jesse and Eliza Tharp. We must continue following the footprints of all clues; for this helps us to find the pieces of the puzzle that bring family connection.

End Notes

1. United States Federal Census Collection, findagrave.com, marriage records.
2. Brotherton, Velda. "Wandering The Ozarks," *The White River Valley News*, November 13, 2008.
3. Wolfenbarger, Larry. "Montague Co., Tx.–Cemeteries–Smyrna Cemetery," 2004; http://files.usgwarchives.net/tx/montague/cemeteries/smyrna.txt.
4. Whatley, Joyce and Ernest. "Smyrna Cemetery," *Montague Milestones*. Vol. 4, No. 4, October 1990.

Nature Reclaims Skelton Family Cemetery

By Jon Schleuss

A Confederate flag peeks through the undergrowth that confines a cemetery buried in the heart of Fayetteville.

The flag is colorful, unfaded. It was placed on top of John Thaddeus Skelton's grave. Skelton's family moved to Washington County in the early 1800s. The flag was placed to honor his service as a Confederate soldier during the Civil War. Skelton's descendants and members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans placed the flag along with an iron cross next to his tombstone.

John T. Skelton died and was buried in the cemetery on property he once owned. By his death in 1908 the property had been well established as a burial site for early Washington County families. Signs made for the cemetery said the area was established as a graveyard in 1878.

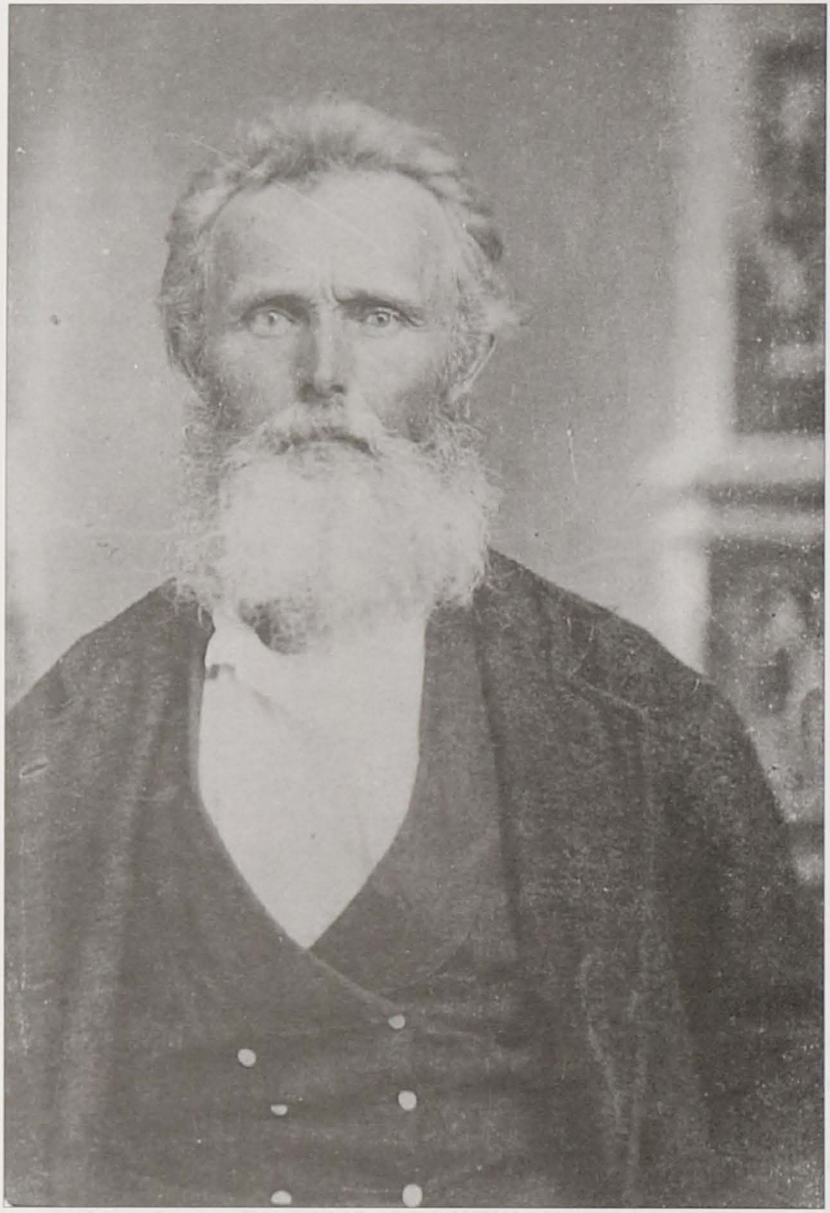
All of the signs have vanished.

The two-acre Skelton Family Cemetery has been reclaimed by nature over the decades, sprinkled with a few attempts to clean the cemetery, to push back the weeds and to restore a tidy peace in the cemetery.

Today the cemetery is hidden by fallen trees, honeysuckle vines and young saplings. It stands neglected, reclaimed again by nature. Its inhabitants are squirrels, birds and ticks. It's a difficult place to find. A large branch hangs above a trail entrance at the dead end of Rayview Drive, which is in a residential area sandwiched between College Avenue and Old Wire Road.

The cemetery is only a few hundred yards from well-manicured lawns and a basketball goal.

About 25 people are buried in the cemetery, according to findagrave.com. The page was mostly organized by Ann Skel-



Photograph courtesy of Ann Skelton Deemer

John Thaddeus Skelton.

Photograph by Charlie Alison

The gravestone of John Thaddeus Skelton and Mary Rebekah Skelton at Skelton Cemetery.

ton Deemer, who is John T.'s great-granddaughter. Ann and her brother Gordon Skelton cleaned the cemetery in 2000 and took an inventory of the gravestones, she said.

John T., the patriarch, is buried next to his family in a plot surrounded by a pipe fence. Mary R. Skelton, John T.'s wife, rests next to him in front of a large stone representing the couple. Not far from them is a monument honoring their son who drowned in the Illinois River when he was 21 years old. Other family members and infants are buried in the fenced area, which is about 30 feet wide and an equal length long.

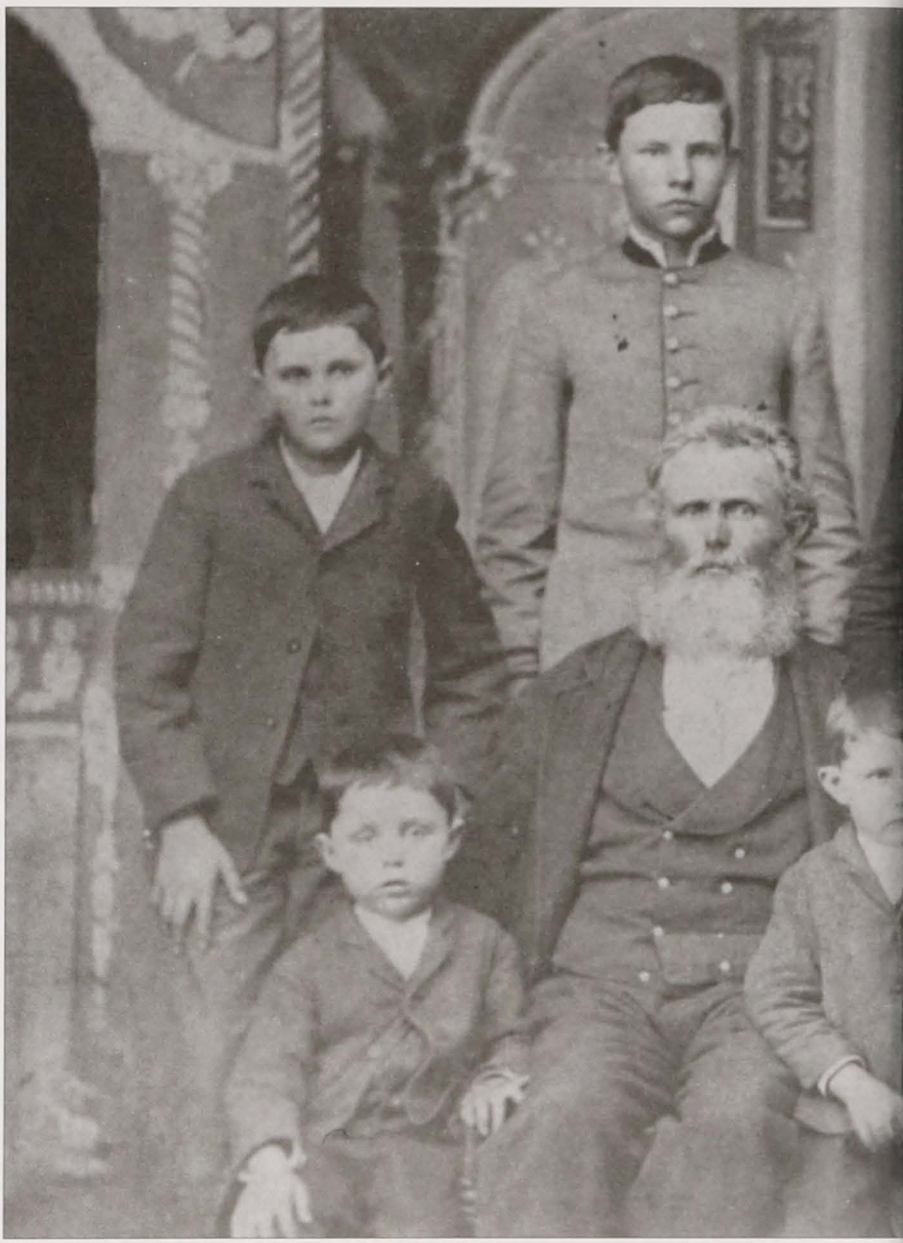
A smaller group of tombstones belonging to the Thatch family sits beyond the Skeltons. Seven Thatchs and one Minnie Mummert are buried in the small grouping, according to a recording by the Washington County chapter of the Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council in 1968 stored in the University of

Photograph by Charlie Alison

The gravestone of Frederic Skelton.

Arkansas Special Collections. The Thatch family is surrounded by a collapsed chain-link fence and their plots are draped with a mass of honeysuckle vines. The flowery vines look like a roof.

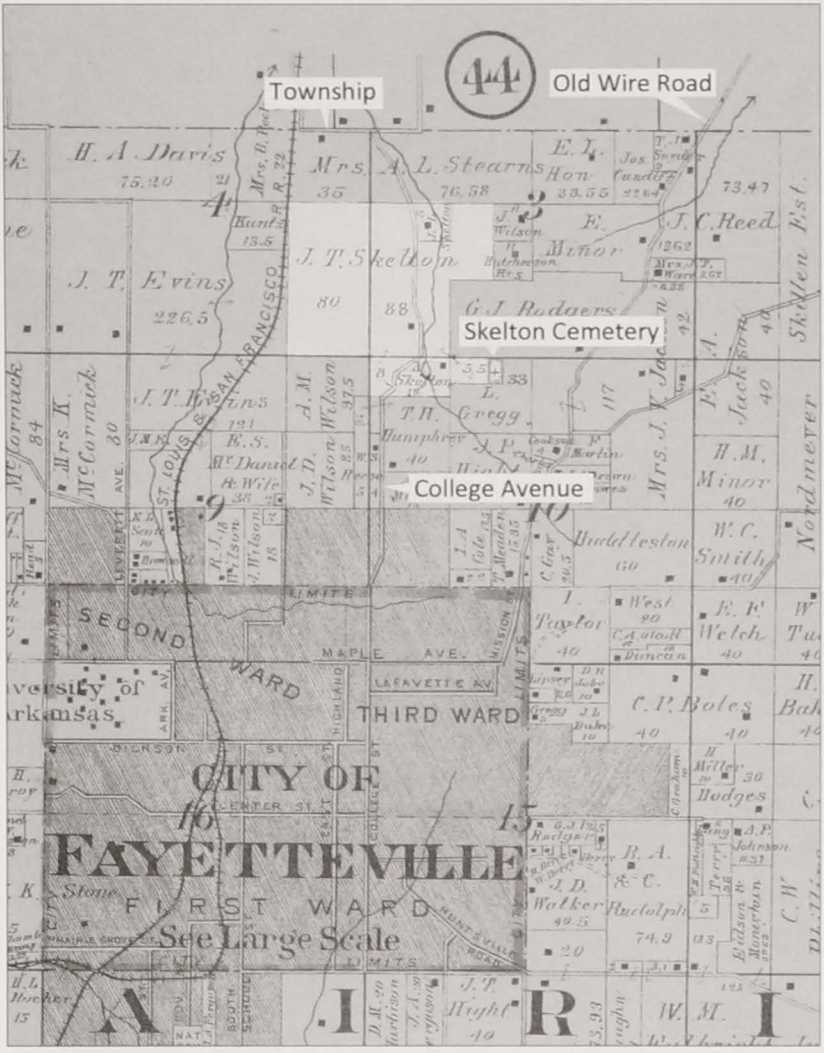
William H. Thatch was the last person buried in the cemetery, according to records. He died in 1934.



The Skelton Family about 1883: From left, James, John E., Gordon, father John T.,

Photograph courtesy of Ann Skelton Deemer

Frederic, William, mother Mary, Polly and Charles.



Plat Map of Washington County, 1908

By 1908, when John T. Skelton died, he owned more than 180 acres north of the Fayetteville city limits. The northern edge of the Skelton farm is on a line with present-day Overcrest Drive; the western edge is aligned with present-day Woolsey Avenue; the southwestern edge follows present-day Sycamore; the western edges were about where present-day Wheeler Avenue is. Skelton's wife, Mary, and son James L. Skelton owned small parcels within the larger area.

A few yards to the north and west lie more plots. Some have flat rocks buried vertically in the ground. Other graves have broken tombstones or bases of previous headstones. The letters "C R" are written on top of one small stone. A broken tombstone nearby has a barely legible, "APR. 7, 1897" carved on it. This is possibly the stone of Susan Minor. The homemaker group listed her and her husband as having died in 1897 and 1889, respectively.

Sunken areas also spot this area.

"I think it was a burial ground there before the Skeltons went up there," Gordon Skelton said by phone.

The neglect of family cemeteries is not uncommon.

They get lost through time, said Jerry Hilliard, who is a station assistant at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville Research Station, part of the Arkansas Archeological Survey.

"There are a lot of Washington County cemeteries out there that are real interesting," he said.

The survey recorded the Skelton cemetery, he said.

The group documents cemeteries to preserve them on paper when their physical locations aren't maintained, Hilliard said.

Sometimes the location of a cemetery dies off with the descendants that cared for it.

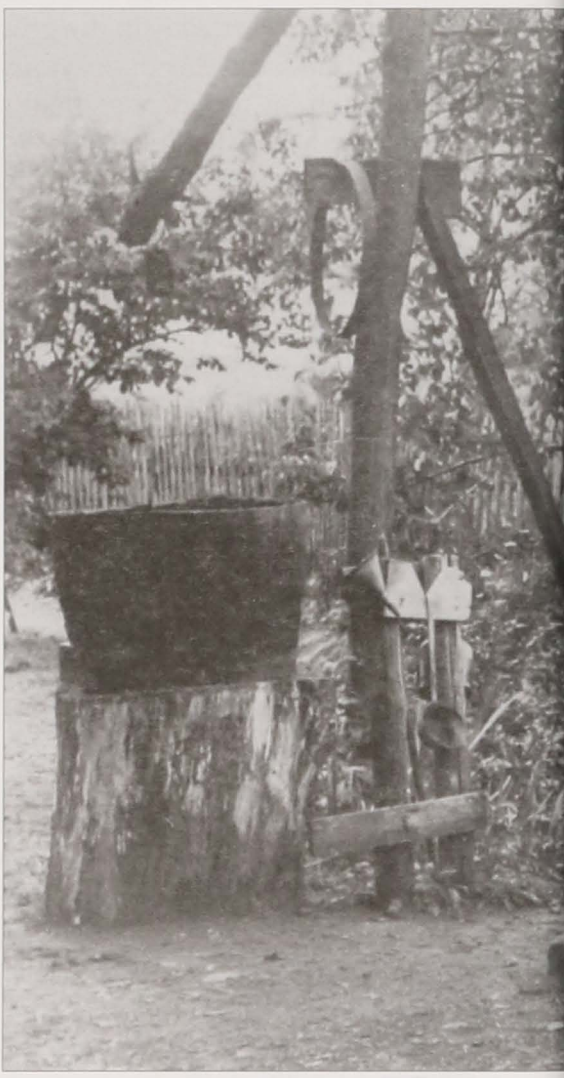
A family story says John T. Skelton picked the cemetery's location because he believed it would be far away from any future railway lines.

The property originally fell outside the Fayetteville's limits. It wasn't annexed by the city until 1946, according to the city's website.

"Once my great-grandfather died, everyone pretty much left," Gordon said.

Gordon's father, Alan Skelton, tried to find the cemetery in 1959. Alan was born in Fayetteville in 1912 and his family moved him to Vicksburg, Miss., a year later.

"As seems to be the case with most of us, I waited until I was old (47 in my case) and everybody in the family who could tell me anything about family history had passed away," Alan wrote



John Thaddeus Skelton next to the well at his home, holding a chain attached to the well bucket on one end and attached to a long lever, the lower end of which can be seen at left. The lever allowed easier drawing of the bucket from the well.

in 1965 for *Flashback*. Alan died in 1979, according to Social Security records.

Alan wrote several times for *Flashback*. He published a Skelton family history in 1960, noting that William Skelton, John T.'s father, moved from Tennessee to Washington County in 1827.

Photograph courtesy of Ann Skelton Deemer

John T. served as 2nd corporal in the Confederate army and participated in the Battle of Prairie Grove, among other battles and skirmishes, Alan wrote.

"At Prairie Grove the hat brim over his left ear was cut off by a ball," Alan wrote. After the war, during reconstruction, John T.

Surrounded by woods, the Skelton family plot within Skelton Cemetery shows

carried a "walking cane sword which he kept handy."

Tensions were high between Confederate and Union troops during this time. Gordon recounted a family story that illustrated this tension nicely.

"My great-grandfather went off to fight in the war," he said. He had a handicapped sister, Meck Skelton, he said.

Photograph by Charlie Alison

how quickly nature overtakes the land.

"Apparently a couple of Union soldiers pushed her down the stairs," Gordon said. "They were local boys."

"My great-grandfather blew one away and chased the other into Indian territory," he said.

After John T.'s death, the family sold all their property, Gordon said.

Washington County owns the cemetery property, said a person who answered the phone at the assessor's office.

"It's kind of owned by the county and kind of not," County Attorney George Butler said.

An 1878 deed conveys the property to the county, but holds it in trust for several people, including John T. Skelton, according to records at the Fayetteville Public Library.

In 2000 Gordon told the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* that the Washington County Historical Society owned the property. A representative for the group said they were approached by the county in the 1970s, but declined the offer.

The murkiness around ownership may be the cause for the cemetery's decrepitude.

Butler recalled that the county cleaned it up in the 1990s and that the descendants would take over the care of the cemetery.

This is corroborated by a 1991 *Northwest Arkansas Times* article.

County officials were exploring the possibility of preserving the site as natural area, according to the article. Toppled tombstones were shown in pictures that ran with the article.

Four years later a Boy Scout proposed to clean the site, according to another *Times* article. The chairman of the troop proposed the idea as an Eagle Scout project.

"This cemetery has bore on my mind," said Jerry Haptonstall, the troop chairman, in a letter, according to the article.

"The county judge signed off on it," Butler said.

A form in a county file showed an empty spot for the Scout master's signature, he said.

"I don't know if they ever did this," Butler said. "I kind of think they haven't."

Butler found another note in the file that said the county judge gave Gordon Skelton clearance to mow the cemetery in 2000 and then the file dead ends, he said.

Few records mention the cemetery after 2000.

"It has once again retreated from everyone's minds until now," Butler said.

He made several calls to people listed in the file and descendants of people buried in the cemetery, he said.

"It looks like there was a group of people to maintain it," he said.

There was a dispute between the neighbors and the Skelton descendants as to whether to clean up the cemetery or not. Residents wanted to turn it into a park, according to Lawrence Skelton, who was interviewed in 2000 for an *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* article.

"Nothing ever came of it," he said. "They could never agree on what they wanted to do."

Ann and her brother have taken on the goal of cleaning the cemetery and repairing tombstones when time permits. Ann lives in Westwego, La., and Gordon lives in Madison, Miss.

In 2009, Ann and her son returned to the area and cleaned the cemetery with the help of Sons of Confederate Veterans, she said. Several trees fell down during a January 2009 ice storm.

"We cut our way in," she said. "We cleaned the entire plot and I could not believe the growth that had gotten in there."

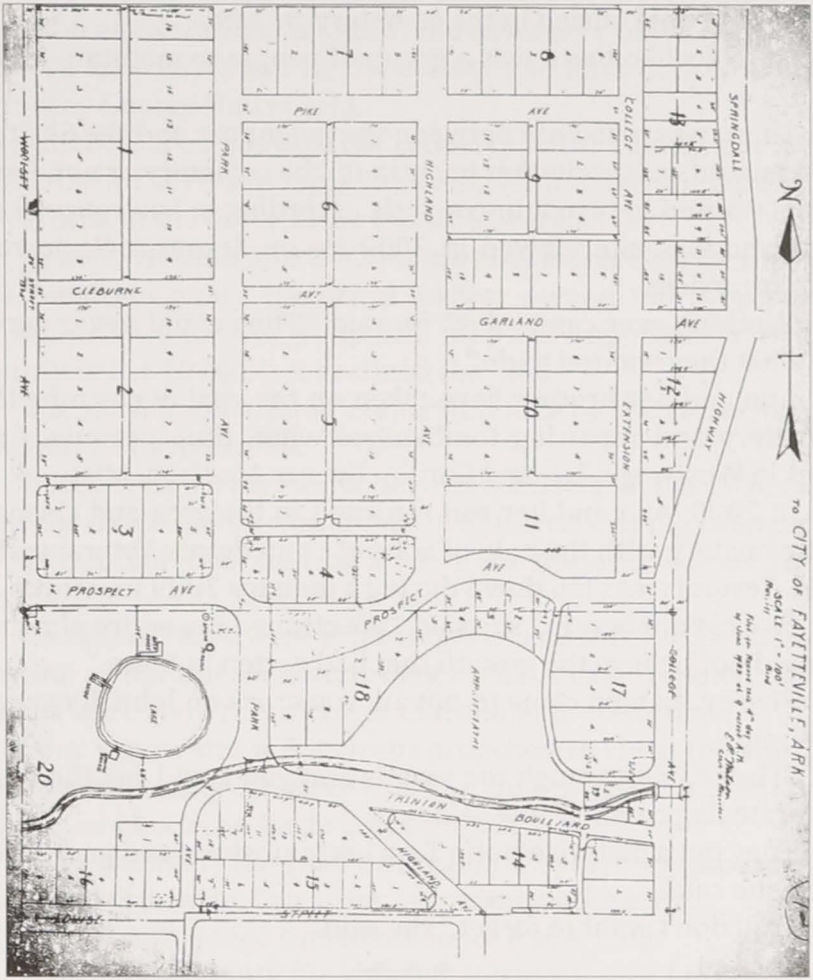
Five or six men came to put an iron cross on John T.'s grave, she said.

"They came through the woods and you could see the Confederate flag coming," she said.

They put a picture of John T. on his tombstone and prayed for him, she said.

"You don't want to forget," she said.

Jonathan Schleuss is a journalism major at the University of Arkansas and researched this article for a feature-writing class.



Plat courtesy of the Washington County Archives

A 1923 plat of the Fayetteville City Park Addition, published here with north to the top of the page, clarified the location of a natural amphitheatre near present-day Wilson Park. The pond at lower left is Trent's Pond, the location of the present-day city park softball field. The amphitheatre was in the large open space between Park Avenue and College Avenue, north of Scull Creek and Trenton Boulevard near the present-day location of Lollar Lane. A footnote in an article about Wilson Park, published in the Winter 2011 edition of *Flashback* (Vol. 61, No. 4) incorrectly identified the amphitheatre's location.

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1831 Sheriff's Census of Washington County

On Wednesday, May 25, 1831, the Arkansas Gazette *published the following census of Washington County, conducted by Lewis Evans, the sheriff of the county. Evans served as sheriff from formation of the county in 1828 to statehood in 1836. He was commissioned on October 24, 1828, and the Washington County town of Evansville is named after him. The population of the county increased by 60 percent between 1830 and 1831.*

"Census of Washington County.—We are indebted to the Sheriff of Washington county, for the following abstract of the Census of that county, taken since the 1st day of Jan. last, vix:—White males, 1761; do. females, 1484; slaves, 244; free colored persons, 10—total 3499. Increase since the 1st day of June last, 1317.—Washington is now the most populous county in the Territory.

"The following additional returns of the Census have been received by the Acting Governor, viz: Crawford county, containing 2486 souls; Crittenden, 1445; St Francis, 1519."

Corrections

An article about the Fletcher family in the Spring 2012 edition of *Flashback* incorrectly stated the name of the woman whom John Franklin Fletcher married. Her name is Sarah Ellen Enyart. She was correctly listed in an ancestry list. Fletcher and Enyart were married October 8, 1879, according to documents held in the archives of Washington County.

The article also indicated that Fletcher Avenue in Fayetteville was named for a Fletcher descendant, Dr. Donald Albert Fletcher, but its naming predates Donald Fletcher's birth.

Planned Gifts

Making charitable gifts to the Washington County Historical Society will enable it to continue and expand its programs.

If you are making regular gifts to the Washington County Historical Society or would like to start, you may find it beneficial to set up or give:

1. A **charitable lead trust** that will pay income to WCHS for a set period.
2. A **charitable remainder trust** that will allow you to transfer property to a trust set up for WCHS without paying capital gains tax on the sale of the property.
3. **Appreciated securities** at their current value and take an income tax deduction for the year up to 30 percent of adjusted gross income.
4. **Gifts from your retirement account** that could be an integral part of planning for those withdrawals.
5. An **irrevocable life insurance trust** that could own your life insurance, when it no longer serves its purpose, to make a charitable gift that could reduce the estate's tax bill.

There are a number of ways to enhance your retirement plans while still providing for your charitable interests and making gifts you never dreamed possible. Consult with your financial adviser on other ways you can make charitable donations. These planned gifts will provide added tax benefits for you and your heir while helping to support the vital mission of the Washington County Historical Society for years to come.

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